

E&C Member Day
Tuesday, July 13, 2021
Written Testimony: Rep. Jennifer Wexton (VA-10)
H.R. 623 – The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0

First, I would like to thank Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers for providing this opportunity to come and testify today so I can highlight an important bill—the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0.

As many of you know, cancer is the number one cause of disease-related death in children age 14 and younger. This year alone, it's estimated that more than 10,000 children in the U.S. under the age of 15 will be diagnosed with cancer. In addition, one in 33 babies born in the U.S. are affected by a birth defect and birth defects are the leading cause of death among infants. Unfortunately, these childhood diseases are still poorly understood, and additional funding is greatly needed to augment existing research to promote new discoveries for children affected by them.

In 2014, Congress passed the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act to uncover new insights into the biology of childhood disease. The law established a Ten-Year Pediatric Research Initiative Fund within the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Common Fund and authorized \$12.6 million in funds annually for pediatric disease research through the Gabriella Miller Kids First Pediatric Research Program, commonly known as Kids First.

Since the original law was enacted, Kids First has made progress towards understanding childhood cancer and disease. It has sequenced more than 20,000 samples from childhood cancer and structural birth defect cohorts and initiated the Gabriella Miller Kids First Data Resource Center—a comprehensive data resource for research and patient communities meant to advance discoveries.

The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0 builds off the important progress made by the 2014 law by providing a new source of funding for the Kids First Research Fund. Specifically, the bill would redirect civil monetary sanctions levied against pharmaceutical, medical device, supplement and cosmetic manufacturers by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission for violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. By diverting penalties from these companies that break the law, the bill would sustain Kids First's critical childhood disease research for generations to come.

The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0 is named to honor my constituent, 10-year-old Gabriella Miller, who passed away from an inoperable brain tumor. She was a fierce advocate for childhood cancer research and her efforts to boost awareness of childhood cancer helped raise funds for children's cancer charities.

I introduced this bill to find treatments and cures so that our nation's children will have a fighting chance to survive cancer and other rare disease. The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0 will reaffirm our strong commitment to finding cures for pediatric diseases.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today. I urge the Committee to schedule a legislative hearing and to markup the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0.